

FOR LADIES ONLY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LADY ELVIA."

So many of my Cheltenham friends said to me, "Miss Prym," or else, "Prunella dear," according to the degree of their intimacy, "wonder you should not go to see this Paris Exhibition that all the world is talking of," that at last I made my mind up to take their advice. I am not, in a general way, fond of travelling, or accustomed to it; but for this once I thought I might venture, and, besides, my medical man was of opinion that change of air would do me good. You want stimulating, Miss Prym," the doctor remarked; "system languid, and a month spent in the crush and bustle of Paris will be the best tonic I can prescribe. Go and get a little wholesome excitement." This decided me, and I went.

My name, as may be inferred from the words quoted above, is Prym—Miss Prunella Prym, of Rhododendron Villa, the Slopes, Cheltenham. I am comfortably well-to-do in the world, and did not grudge the expense of taking two servants with me—my trusty maid Gubbins, and Thomas Coachman, a very steady, elderly man, long in the service of my late papa, the Rev. Dr. Prym, D. D., presbytery of Dulchester, and rector of Great Titching, of whose savings I was sole heiress. Although Thomas, from old habit, is still called "Coachman," I do not keep a carriage, preferring to hire one when required, and the man takes care of the garden, besides officiating in a domestic capacity as a kind of butler. Maid and man are old and faithful attendants, and I felt their presence a sort of protection.

I was to travel to Paris by easy stages, taking two days for the journey, and, on arriving there, I intended to drive straight to the house of a married friend, an old school-fellow (if the term "fellow" can be applied to a lady without disrespect), now Mrs. Trimmles, of the Avenue de l'Impératrice, Champs Elysees. I meant, of course, to take apartments for myself, but I dreaded the enormous prices and distracting noise of an hotel crowded with eager excursionists. I was very glad, therefore, to accept the hospitable invitation of Marion Trimmles—how odd it seemed to call her anything but Marion Freeman, as when we learned French and wore the back-board in the same class!—to make her house my head-quarters while looking out for something suitable. Mr. Trimmles, who is a good sort of person, but not very well-bred, though considered as a catch for Marion, having a large fortune, made somehow out of Government contracts, and who is older than his wife, and lives in Paris to please her, seconded her invitation in a very hearty manner. And so, with a considerable quantity of baggage—since it would not do to appear in such a place as Paris without an ample wardrobe—and with the good wishes and hopeful predictions of my friends, I started for the continent.

During the first portion of the journey there was nothing to record. The degrading miseries of the sea passage, the two hours consumed in which seemed to me to be elastic, and to be equal to two of the longest of long days that I had ever spent; the prying of the French custom-house officers into trunks and boxes—these topics are too true to be worth dilating upon. I only knew that I should meet when first I saw a horrid foreigner—a male person, with a glazed hat and monstrosities—plunge his presuming paws into the midst of my wearing apparel, and could hardly suppress a shriek as I saw my all-sorts-of-things—of which a man is supposed to know, and ought to know, nothing—tossed over and towled about, and held up for inspection in the most brazen style. But I will say that these whiskered officials were vastly polite to me, in their impertinent, smirking, foreign way, and did not seize anything, although poor Gubbins was unjustly suspected of being a female smuggler, and narrowly escaped the indignity of a search, but at my intercession was permitted to pass on. Then Thomas, as I am told is the case with most English men-servants abroad, grumbled a good deal, and was perpetually losing himself here, and getting left behind there, so that I grew quite weary of hunting after him and interpreting for him, and began to wish I had left him and Gubbins (who was tearful and resigned, and gave herself the most provoking airs of being a martyr) at home. I was wrong, though. Before my feet were on the Paris pavement, I had cause to be thankful that those two true and trusty creatures had accompanied me.

The dusk of evening was fast closing in already when we arrived at Amiens, and, of course, we the passengers by the tidal press from Boulogne, had to alight and change trains. The notice, "For Ladies Only," though, of course, it was in French, affixed to the door of a first-class compartment, caught my eye. "Ouvrez, Monsieur, s'il vous plait," I said to a slim young guard, who held a key in his hand. He pulled open the door with a jerk. "Madame will be alone," he said, "alone all the way. She will have the carriage to herself up to Paris." I got in accordingly, and Gubbins and Thomas proceeded to make me comfortable, and to hand me in my portable property—bag, dressing-case, shawl, packet of sandwiches, side-books, and so on.

I travel with a good deal of light luggage, because, although it makes the getting in and out of the carriage a work of time, and although one is always wretched for fear of forgetting something, one never knows what one may want—fancy work, or a book, or a smelling-bottle—and it is best to be prepared. Then my man and maid went to take their own seats in the second class, as so little distance, and presently the train started.

"Well, this is nice," said I, as I settled myself snugly in a well-padded corner, and drew a shawl around my knees—"this is nice. We unprotected females, as they call us, have the best of it." I said this in a kind of self-satisfied soliloquy, as the train rattled on through the thickening darkness. We were clear of Amiens by this time, station, city, ramparts, and bifurcation, and were rushing very fast through a lonely country, where great rusky pools, sullen sheets of water that looked lead-colored in the dim light, were the most conspicuous objects of the landscape. A bare, blurred landscape it was, with only here and there a white cottage or a stunted tree to break the dull uniformity of swamp and pasture. It was not, you may be sure, the beauty of the prospect that had prompted my remark, but the fact that the train, on account of the Exhibition, I suppose, was very full. There were large families, and young men, and married couples, and queer Russian-looking voyagers in black lambskin caps and furred boots, but I was the only lady travelling alone, and whilst the rest were squeezed and shouted and thrust in anywhere, I, in my solitary dignity, had elbow-room and to spare. Hence my remark. But what was my horror to hear, or to think I heard, a heavy sigh, in answer to my words!

A sigh it most unmistakably was, and yet I was alone in the carriage; I glanced round to assure myself of the fact. Yes! Unassuredly I had all the eight seats for my own special accommodation. There lay my cloaks, my bag, (best solid morocco leather, silver

mounted, and fitted with a Bramah lock, a most convenient bag, in which I kept my keys, my purse, and a few other indispensable articles), and my parasol, umbrella, and dressing-case. Nothing was disturbed. Who then had heaved the deep sigh that had followed so immediately upon my little outbreak of self-congratulation? Either my senses must have played me false, or myself must have sighed without knowing it. Fancy is capable of strange pranks, and this is a specimen of them, thought I; but at that very moment I heard a low sound, something between a groan and a growl, and then a rushing noise that appeared to proceed from behind the seat opposite to me, and on the elastic cushions of which my feet were comfortably reposing. I snatched them away, now—my feet, I mean—more abruptly than I had always maintained to be the true deportment for a gentleman. I am sure, this time, that my ears had not deceived me.

But what could be the origin of the extraordinary sounds that had thus broken in upon my reverie? The idea of ghosts I sternly rebuked. I have always, as a rule, set my face against ghosts. I am a sound churchwoman, I hope, and not superstitious, and I have never countenanced any of the idle talk of the younger generation of my neighbors with regard to spirit-knocks and table-turning, things which I am certain, by late lamented father, Dr. Prym, would never have permitted in his parish. Besides, though I have heard of haunted houses, I never did happen to hear of a haunted railway-carriage. The notion was preposterous. But again came the same sound, the growl this time predominating over the groan, and the stealthy rustling noise increased, and I saw the valance opposite to me shake violently. I grew excessively nervous. What had I got for a fellow-traveller? Then the idea flashed upon me that the creature concealed beneath the drab drapery in front of me was probably a dog, and slyly placed there by some dishonest master who preferred to make the company carry his canine favorite gratis to providing quarters for him in the regular doggerly, or whatever they call it.

There was some relief in that supposition, but, even then, my position was far from being an agreeable one. I am one of those persons who dislike dogs, except, of course, in their proper place. And their proper place is not where I am. I have all my life, too, had a lively fear of hydrophobia, and the idea that a strange dog—and a large one, to judge by the disturbance that it made in dragging itself over the floor—was boxed up with me, and with no one to keep it in order, was very unwelcome. What might the brute do, if irritated? I determined to be conciliatory, and yet on the alert, so that while I picked up my parasol as the readiest weapon I could find, in case of a sudden rush, I said, in a coaxing tone, "Poor fellow! pooty fellow! good dog!" A hoarse, gurgling noise, resembling the deep, harsh gurrl! gurrl! that I once heard from two savage mastiffs, worrying one another at the corner of the street, replied to my endearments, and already in imagination I felt the beast's sharp teeth close upon my ankle, but in sagacious accents I resumed:—"Poor fellow, poor—" when I beheld a sight that stopped the words on my lips, froze the blood in my veins, and turned me, for the moment, into stone.

The flapping drab valance was lifted, and out popped a head—not the head of a dog, 'twill as I am when confronted by these animals, I should infinitely have preferred to set eyes upon the sleek coat and black muzzle and grinning teeth of even a bulldog, to the shocking reality of the case. This was the head of a man. I sat, gasping and staring, with my useless parasol pointed at the intruder. All that I had ever heard or read, of atrocities perpetrated in railway travel, stories of madmen, of felons, and of riotous wretches with their drink, came crowding upon my mind at once. And here was I, in a fair way myself to supply the raw material for a sensational paragraph in the newspapers; I, Prunella Prym, the very last person that any acquaintance of hers would have supposed likely to figure, however blamelessly, in the grim column of accidents and offenses. I thought of all this as I gazed, horror-stricken, at the face before me, the face of a man of forty years of age, broad, sunfreckled, impudent, with a shaggy brown beard like the mane of an ugly lion. How long I looked at this unwelcome apparition I cannot tell; but I was recalled at once to a sense of decorum and of the peril of my position, by the remark, in a rough north country accent, "Hoop, you'll know me again, old lady! that's all!"

It was with an Englishman, then, that I had to deal. There was one comfort in that, for at least I could beg my life with a certainty of being understood, whereas I might find the irregular verbs and the genders horribly in my way in the attempt to mollify a foreign scoundrel. I had discovered since crossing the channel that my French, learned as it had been at the selectest of select seminaries, and from a native with a Parisian accent, was not quite so fluent or correct in practice as it had been declared to be in theory. It was, in fact, what an amusing literary gentleman whom I met at one of our Cheltenham tea-parties described as the French of Stratford-at-Bowe, rather than the French of Paris. It was preferable to appeal to the better feelings of a ruffian of one's own country and speech.

Meanwhile the body had followed the head in struggling out from underneath the seat, and the whole man stood on the floor of the swaying carriage, which in that part of the journey rocked and jerked a good deal, so that he had to lay hold of the padded partition next to him to steady himself. He was very red in the face, and he panted for breath, and groaned as he stretched his limbs. "Cramped in every joint, and as near being smothered as ever a chap was!" grumbled the man. "You don't know how hot and close it is under there, ma'am, breathing what seems more like wool-dust than air into one's lungs, and aching till you begin to think you'll never straighten your backbone again. It's been a long bout of it, to me, the run from Amiens." This last observation suggested to me that we were still at a considerable distance from Paris—much farther, naturally, than from Amiens—since the space that had appeared so long—and no wonder—the man, crouched under the seat and half stifled, had seemed to me but trifling. What a much longer "bout" would be the remainder of the journey, if it were to be performed in such cramped quarters! But I was puzzled as to what reply was to be made to the man's remarks. Really, to judge by this man's tone of intense self-commissioner, one might have thought that he expected me to condole with him on the inconveniences of his late painful position beneath the valance! But that seemed as absurd as it would be to deplore the misfortunes of a burglar who should cut his finger in removing the glass from one's pantry window, while I could not ask the creature his motives for so singular a concealment, lest the answer might prove to be of a character practical and unpleasant.

What did he want? Was it my watch, or money on which the villain had designs, or

was it my life also that was at stake, or—was he an escaped lunatic—one of those terrible transients, the asylums where the insane are lodged, and who now and then break loose by some preternatural exertion of force or cunning, and range, wild beast like, until they are hunted down? He did not look mad, but then looks so often mislead, and in any case, his purpose must be an unlawful one. No respectable man would have lain in ambush under the seat of a railway carriage—that much was only too clear.

"Sung this, isn't it, ma'am?" said the trespasser, with a dreadful sort of jocularity, after a time; "uncommonly snug I call it, don't you?"—and he threw himself into the middle seat of the carriage, on the opposite side, and rubbed his great hands together in an insulting way that made my flesh creep. I had been taking a wary survey of him out of the corners of my eyes for some minutes, in hopes of ascertaining what kind of evil-doer he was, but I could not make my mind up. He was tolerably well dressed in a suit of black broadcloth, but it was very dusty and fluffy, as was natural, after his sojourn beneath the drab drapery; and his cravat, of a staring pattern, red and green, was loose and awry. He had a soft felt hat, a silver watch-chain, and very muscular hands, with short thick fingers. He was a strongly built, thick-set personage, of middle height, and unquestionably what we at Cheltenham call a vulgarian. He might, by a general griteness and dinginess that clung to him, have had something to do with coals, or wood, or iron, or contracts for railway making, or that kind of avocation. He was upright, however, and sunburned, and had, very likely, been a volunteer, somewhere in that north country whence he came. He was not a common thief, whatever he might be.

"This is the compartment for ladies only, ain't it?" said the intruder, bluntly, after a fresh pause. Now I must speak. I felt that, while at the same time I had not any idea of the wisest course to pursue. Should I freeze the audacious wretch by a chilling behavior, and assert my womanly dignity by monosyllabic coldness? or should I play a bolder game, and be affable? All things considered, I thought I would be affable. "It is so, sir," said I, trying to speak in the same conciliatory tone that I should have used at Rhododendron Villa to a morning visitor—our vicar, for example, or old Sir George Huff, who drinks the waters annually. "I'm in luck, for once!" said the man, joyously smiting his knee with his open hand in a violence that made me start. "I didn't know, when I got in and crawled under that flounce of a thing, whether half-dozen bothersome chaps mightn't be taking their places, and poking their portmanteaus and traps underneath, in which case I'd have been discovered to a certainty. Besides, the cramps were so bad, lying doubled up there, that I must have hallooed long before we got to Paris, whoever had been in the carriage. I say—what's that? Sandwiches, by George!"—and the fellow pounced upon the packet, neatly done up in white paper, that lay on the seat in front of mine, and began to eat as voraciously as if he had been on short commons for a week.

"I'm half starved; hungry as a hawk," he growled out, with his mouth full; "and so would any fellow be that had been hunted up and down, and forced to hide behind my stacks, as I have. It was touch and go with me in Amiens. I'd have been grabbed before to-morrow, if I'd not seen this carriage in a siding, under a shed, with the door open, and a porter trimming the lamp. I overheard one of the French beggars say this was to be part of the train, and lucky it was I learned some of their lingo when I was—never mind that! Got a drop of comfort with you, ma'am?—rum, gin, brandy?—I'm not nice" (which last word, however, he pronounced "nach," but I guessed his meaning). "You are very welcome to the sandwiches," said I, "but as for ardent spirits, I am sorry that I cannot meet your wishes. As a lady—"

"Ah! but you look just the sensible, easy sort of lady to have a flask of something comfortable along with you," said the man, with an incredulous grin. "What's that in the little basket? It looks like a bottle, don't it?" and he very coolly drew the basket over towards him as he spoke, and removed the wicker-covered bottle within.

But the bottle contained nothing more tempting than eau de cologne, and my free-and-easy new acquaintance laid it down with an oath. "I should have been the better for a raw nip!" he said, sulkily, and then he jumped up, and peered through the glass into the night. We had just passed the lights of a small station at which the express made no halt. There was a long and awkward silence. It was broken by the intrusive stranger. He had taken up my Bradshaw, which lay among my other portable articles, and was fluttering over the leaves:—"This train stops but once," he muttered to himself; "we shall get to Creil presently."

My heart was in my mouth, as it were, when I heard this, and remembered that we were approaching the large junction that he had named. We should make a halt there, and if I could but keep this savage in good humor until within reach of help, then—He seemed to read my thoughts, for he bent forward, looking fixedly at me the while, and gripped me by the wrist with a force that made me give a little start. There was a black bruise left behind by the grasp of his hard hand, a bruise that I showed to sympathizing friends for a month afterwards. "No nonsense, ma'am, for I won't stand it!" he said, threateningly; "when you get to that station, you'll please to sit as still—do you hear?—as if you were a waxwork. Beckon to a porter, call the guard, speak one word above your breath, and see what comes of it!" "What right have you—?" I began, doing my best to pluck up a little spirit; but he cut me short. "Mightn't be right in a job like this," he said, very gruffly, and with so fierce a look that I gave up all ideas of opposition, and began to sob. But even this consolation was denied me, for that he said angrily, that he "wished I'd leave off that row; he hated 'smivelling.' And I was forced to be calm.

"My tyrant now pulled his soft felt hat down over his brows, and leaning back in his place, seemed to be either half asleep or deep in thought. I sat watching him as a half-dead mouse might eye a cat. The train flew on, racing towards Creil. My thoughts were as busy as my limbs were inert. Who, or what, was this man? What had he done? And, more interesting still, from a personal point of view, what was he going to do? That he knew, but whether he was flying from some circumstances. Really, to judge by this man's tone of intense self-commissioner, one might have thought that he expected me to condole with him on the inconveniences of his late painful position beneath the valance! But that seemed as absurd as it would be to deplore the misfortunes of a burglar who should cut his finger in removing the glass from one's pantry window, while I could not ask the creature his motives for so singular a concealment, lest the answer might prove to be of a character practical and unpleasant.

What did he want? Was it my watch, or money on which the villain had designs, or

ery for help, one effort to call for a rescue. My terrible fellow-traveller chuckled grimly as the last door was slammed, as the whistle sounded, and off went the train again, bound for Paris. "Now, miss, or ma'am, whichever you may be, there's a time enough for us to settle our little affairs before we get to Paris. You seem a sensible, tidyish old girl, and I'm sure you won't make any unnecessary fuss. I'm not a man to be trifled with!"

As the wretch made the above remarks, he drew out his silver hunting watch, opened it, and looked at it as if he were computing the number of minutes that remained to him. "Lots of time!" he observed, putting up his watch. What did the monster mean? I trembled from head to foot, and I should like to have fainted, but did not dare to permit myself so much as a slight hysterical attack. The case was too serious for such palliatives. Did he mean to murder me? I could not tell. He was a live riddle, beyond my guessing. When vexed, he was ferocious enough, but it was a facetious sort of ferocity after all, and I am not sure that he did not frighten me more by leering and chuckling, as if he had been an ogre indeed, than a solemn and melodramatic villain could have done. It was with a keen and a melancholy interest that I suffered my thoughts to stray to Rhododendron Villa, the home that I should perhaps never see again; to my garden blooming in beauty; my azaleas; my velvet lawn and glossy shrubbery; my birds, twittering behind their cage-wires; and poor Tibby, most faithful of cats, whose smooth white fur her mistress would never more caress. How I regretted my pusillanimity in not calling for help at the Creil station! Here I was now, as much alone with this man, mad or felonious, as if we had been cast away together on some desolate island.

The man seemed to be in no particular hurry. He was master of the situation, and he knew it. He had drawn a thick parcel, wrapped in leather, from his breast pocket, and for several minutes he sat poised and fingering this, as if to satisfy himself that its contents were yet intact. Then he replaced it, and turned to me, watch in hand: "Time's up!" he said briskly; "we must look sharp, now!" Any one might have knocked me down with a feather. The crisis had come. Perhaps in a few moments I should be hurled, dead or dying, out of the doorway of the carriage, and my bones crushed to splinters beneath the grinding iron wheels. "O, my good man!" I began, but my tongue seemed to refuse its office. The tyrant laughed, but not in the same way as before. Evidently, as we drew near to Paris, he was himself growing fidgety and ill at ease. "Hark ye, ma'am," he said, hissing the words like a devil, into my ear. "I'm a desperate man, I'm drove and hunted till I don't care what I do, so I can only pull through. If you choose, the little matter of business can be got over quietly and in a friendly spirit. But I'd as soon swing for a sheep as a lamb, so make up your mind—yes, or no?"

"Anything—anything ladylike!" I gasped out, feebly. "You've hit it," said the stranger, with an undeserved admiration for my supposed astuteness. "And pretty sharp you must be to find out what I'm driving at. Now don't you scream, or any of that. Hold your hands out, together—so!" And he produced a red handkerchief, in which he proceeded, deftly to form the nose of a slip-knot. To bind my hands together was clearly his intention.

Such power of resistance as there was in me rose wildly up. "No, I won't!" I screamed out. "Touch me, at your peril. I—" It was useless. My protest and my kicking (for I am certain I did kick, and vigorously) went for nothing. In one moment I found my hands squeezed together, and my wrists tied as firmly as if my captor had never in his life done anything but handcuff other people. I shrieked and shrieked again, almost cracking my voice in my frantic efforts to establish a communication with the guard. No one heard me or heeded me, of all the hundreds whirling up to Paris in my nominal company. And in a minute more I was gagged, gagged with my own white pocket-handkerchief and a square of unfinished Berlin wool-work, that the miscreant snatched up from the same basket that had contained the wicker-covered bottle. I knew there were needles left sticking in it, and I shuddered, but the thing was done so quickly that I had no time for remonstrance.

By this we were near enough to Paris for my bewildered eyes to distinguish the glow of a sullen light that always heralds one's approach to a great city, and as we rushed on, the myriads of yellow lamps, like so many fiery eyes, began to twinkle and glimmer through the night. I sat, idly watching them, as I have heard that condemned persons sometimes count the spikes of the dock, or the curls of the judge's wig. Every moment might be my last. When I looked round again, my tormentor had metamorphosed his personal appearance in a manner that would have struck me speechless, even without the aid of the gag. He had taken up a large black silk cloak of mine, a cloak which I had often worn in going out on foot, to drink tea with my neighbors in summer, and which I called a cashash. This he had wrapped round him so as to make it resemble the skirt of a dress, and over it he wore my cashmere patelot, braided in jet, with a great Scotch shawl draping his shoulders. He had a pocket looking-glass in his hand, by the help of which he contemplated his own features with a self-satisfied smirk, while he adjusted a silk neck-scarf, with fringed ends, so as to hide his shaggy beard. Was he mad, or—

Before I could frame a conjecture he turned, and with unceremonious haste transferred my bonnet—a lilac bonnet, with black marabou feathers and rich bangle trimming—from my head to his own. I was done rapidly, and so roughly that it felt quite thankful that my hair is really and truly my own, as otherwise it might have followed the bonnet. He tied the strings under his chin, with a hasty jerk, and drew down the thick veil, so as to hide his face. Thus accoutred, the wretch might have been mistaken, on a cursory view, for a tall, powerful, grenadier sort of female, the rather that he put on what he doubtless considered as a mining and delicate air, and held down his head, as if practising a part. But the reason of this outrageous travesty was beyond me. A madman's freak it might be, but then—

Hang! bang! bang! I heard the thud of the buffers, and carriage after carriage came to a halt, beside a brilliantly lighted platform, under the lofty iron roof of an enormous station. Paris! Yes, we had arrived, with sounding of the steam-whistle, and tinkle of telegraph-bells, and gleaming of lamp-signals, and instantly began the roar and clang that attend the arrival of a long train at such a place as Paris; trucks, porters, passengers, all in motion at once, reclaiming luggage, collecting family parties, and bawling for the missing. Mechanically, as the man let down the window, I tried to thrust out my head. "Not I know it," said the ruffian, the shawl, that Gubbins had remarked me to take with me, he half dragged, half pushed me to the other side of the carriage, and bound me with the shawl to the projecting arm of the par-

tion. "Keep still, if you're wise," he said, hoarsely; and then adding in a lighter tone, "I must borrow the bag, too—wish you a good night, ma'am!" opened the door, and gently reclosing it when outside, tripped with the greatest efferontry across the lighted platform, carrying my bag (solid morocco, mounted), and wearing my bonnet, cashash, etc., while their owner, sat in helpless bondage in a corner of the carriage.

Before long, a thrill shot through me, as I heard Thomas Coachman's well-known voice asking gruffly, "Where's missus?" I was within earshot of friends, then, and no longer defenseless. But, to my horror, Gubbins replied:—"There she goes! yonder. What a hurry she's in, too! Come, Thomas!" "That's never she," grumbled Thomas, with a fine intelligence that did him infinite credit; "that's not our Miss Prunella, that great gawky marmoset, striding along like a Cockney China fowl. I tell you, but our faithful Gubbins was positive. She would swear to her mistress' Scotch shawl, also, among a thousand; and she dragged Thomas off through the crowd. Words could never do justice to my feelings, left thus deserted, for that those two trusty followers of mine had gone in pursuit of my will-o'-the-wisp of a shawl, on the shoulders of the impostor, I did not doubt. But it was in vain that I tried to extricate myself from my bonds; in vain that I tried to call to my humble friends, betwixt whom and myself the distance widened at every instant. I could produce, thanks to the completeness with which the gag had been arranged, no sound louder than the gurgling cry of some drowning person, while, fastened as I was to the woodwork of the partition, I resembled a fixture of the company's rolling stock, more than a lady of property and social consideration.

Gradually the crowd thinned, the noise decreased, the bustle dwindled, and the porters went compeedly about their regular work of "taking up" (I believe I have the correct expression) the now empty train. I heard a man come scrambling along the roofs of the carriages, to extinguish the lamps, no doubt, for the light overhead was abruptly put out, and I was left in total darkness, shivering in a corner of the compartment. I say shivering, because, though by the almanac the month was May, to judge by my feelings it might have been February. It was one of those raw chill evenings of which we had so many in the spring of this year, and I trembled, not only with fear, but with cold as well. But I was quite powerless even to call for assistance, and the lamps were put out, and the axles tapped with a hammer, and the coupling chains and screws undone, and the train divided into sections, like an eel beneath the cook's chopper, without any one being aware that the compartment "For Ladies Only" had still an involuntary occupier.

Presently two men arrived, summoned by a third, and my carriage was pushed along the rails, placed on what I believe is called a turntable, and slowly spun round. There was a click and a jerk, and the men stood panting and resting after their exertions. "Lively fears came pressing now, like a hideous phantasmagoria, on my wretched brain as I sat alone in the darkness. What would become of me? I gathered from what I heard of the discourse of the men at work on the train, that the carriage of which I was a most unwilling tenant was to be put aside ("shunted away" is, I am told, the technical English phrase), as not immediately wanted. Here was a pleasant prospect! I should be left in some out-of-the-way shed, in some dreary storehouse, in a crypt, or a tunnel, or some patch of neglected ground, lumbered with rusty engines and disused carriages, and there I might starve to death, or be murdered by thieves, or perhaps eaten by rats. I had read shocking things of the rats of Paris, and there I was, dumb, while one cry would save me. "Adieu! en route!" exclaimed one of the porters, and the carriage was pushed on a yard or so.

I made a violent effort to proclaim my presence, in vain. "Guggle! guggle! guggle!" such were the only sounds that I could frame, and for a minute or two I continued guggling like an insane soda-water bottle, and then ceased, exhausted, despairing. "Gubbins it was, my faithful Gubbins, that saved me after all. Her voice was sweeter than music in my ears, as the door was torn open, and by the bright yellow glare of several lanterns I saw my two worthy creatures, and with them half-a-dozen of railway officials, led by a man in uniform, with "Interpreter" embroidered on his gold-laced cap. Amid exclamations and outcries I was released and helped to alight. The bandage round my wrists was untied; the gag was taken from my mouth; and then I let my head fall on the sympathetic shoulder of Gubbins, and enjoyed for the first time the luxury of a good cry. "But whatever has come to you, ma'am? Where's your bonnet?" was my maid's very natural question. And then, rather incoherently, I suppose, I told my story. The interpreter listened to it with great eagerness. "Hein!" he said; "that famous rascal, the scroog, that the English detected, has been watching for, must have been the purloiner of the bonnet. Pardon! Madame will have to repeat all this for the information of the police."

And an agreeable promenade I had of it, across the rails, and along the lighted platform, where every one connected with the station came out to stare at my bonnetless head and disordered hair, and generally scared and crumpled appearance. I must have looked more like some dishevelled virago fresh from a street affray than anything else, as I was brought into the office of the commissary of police, where I found, not merely that functional and his agents, with their swords and cocked hats, but two English detective officers, from Scotland Yard, in plain clothes.

There was a dreadful fuss, taking of depositions, reading over of answers, questioning without end, but at last the truth dawned upon me. "The man—the monster to whom my misfortunes were due—turned out to be a runaway cashier of some great ironworks, near Bradford in Yorkshire. He had gone off with nearly nineteen hundred pounds in gold and notes, the property of his employers, and it was discovered that he had obtained his post by means of a forged character, and was an old offender, well known to the police. He had been tracked as far as Amiens, where he narrowly escaped capture by concealing himself near the railway station and selecting a moment when, unobserved, he was able to slip into a railway carriage and ensconce himself under the valance, whence he had emerged in the manner I have described. Guessing pretty accurately that his pursuers would be on the lookout for him at the Paris terminus, he had formed the bold and crafty design of muffling himself in my spare wearing apparel, and in this disguise of getting unsuspected out of the station.

And in this, thanks to the crowd and the bustle, he succeeded only too well. He gave the slip to the detectives, and I have not yet had the pleasure of reading an account of his apprehension. It was very late when I was permitted to leave the police office, and as my keys were all in the bag which the swindler had carried

off, along with my bonnet and other things, so that I was unable to open my trunks for the satisfaction of the police employes, while my purse and railway ticket were gone with my keys, I felt that I could not present myself, in my present disreputable attire, bonnetless and untidy, at my friend's house. Mr. Trimmles is not a man of refined sympathies, and he afterwards received the tale of my hairbreadth escape with such unfeeling merriment as to cause me to be thankful that I had not made a laughing-stock of myself by going direct to Marion's abode, as I had meant to do. I went therefore to a hotel, and tremendous as the sum total of my bill for three days certainly was, and heavy as were the extortions to which I, along with multitudes of my countrymen, had to submit during my month's sojourn of the Exhibition, I cared less for them than I could have believed possible, glad and grateful as I was to have got as well as I did out of that nightmare of a journey (I shall shun carriages labelled "For Ladies Only," in future, as a hydrophobic patient shuns cold water) never to be forgotten, by Prunella Prym or any of her circle of Cheltenham society, to the last day of their lives.—From Temple Bar.

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